

IMPACT OF PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM ON BPL FAMILIES AN ANALYSIS OF PUNJAB

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ABSTRACT

All over the world hunger eradication and poverty alleviation are twin objectives of Public Distribution System (PDS) in the developing countries like India. It is intended to serve as a safety net for the poor by providing essential goods and services, mainly the food items i.e rice, wheat, sugar, kerosene to all sections of population especially the poorest of the poor at reasonable cost. Effectiveness of the Public Distribution System (PDS) depends on a large number of policy decisions regarding operational & organisational aspects of the PDS. To identify the real impact and implications of any policy, functioning of any policy at the micro level is analysed. The present paper intends to analyse the operational aspects of PDS at the grassroots level. It examines the consumers' responses to various issues in the PDS like quality, price, availability and accessibility of food grains supplied under PDS, behaviour of dealers of FPS with the customers and also the experiences, complaints and grievances of people in the overall functioning and effectiveness of PDS in Sangrur district of Punjab.

KEYWORDS: Public Distribution System, Punjab, Food Grain

INTRODUCTION

India's Public Distribution System is the most important social service and the largest single retail System in the world. The system provides food security to poor households of the society in the country, by ensuring them, their essential fixed requirements at lower prices than in the open market. So, this system becomes even more important in the wake of recent economic reforms and liberalisation of the Indian economy. Today, India has the largest stock of grain in the world besides China. With a network of more than 5 million Fair Price Shops (FPS), the government spends Rs.750 billion per year to distribute annually food grains to about 16 crore families, the public distribution system (PDS) in India is perhaps the largest distribution network of its type in the world. Public distribution system (PDS), a important instrument to eradicate poverty, of the Indian government's economic policy, procure and distributes major commodities such as wheat, rice, sugar and kerosene to over 330 million poor people living in India, through Fair Price Shops (FPS). It also ensures the availability of food to the general public at affordable price. Under PDS, government procures available quantities of food grains from farmers at minimum support prices, stores them for further distribution to various states as per their demands. The PDS has been in operation for more than four decades now in India. The concept of Public Distribution System in the country was evolved around 1942 due to shortage of food grains during 2nd World War and Government intervention in distribution of food started. . Its greatest achievement lies in saving more and more families from hunger in the country.

For example: the wide-spread drought of 1987, which has been considered one of the worst of the twentieth century the PDS significantly helped the country to overcome it with dignity and effectiveness as it mitigated the suffering of the poor. The intervention of Government in distribution of food grains in the food scarcity period and, thereafter, continued in major cities, towns & certain food deficit areas. This policy of Public Distribution System/Rationing System has undergone several changes with every lap of Five Year Planning System in the country. The Seventh Five Year Plan assigned to it a crucial role by bringing the entire population under Public Distribution System and became a permanent feature in the country's economy. As part of the structural adjustment intended to reduce public expenditure, PDS has been modified as Revamped PDS (RPDS) during 1992 and later on to face the growing dissatisfaction with this system, in June 1997 the Indian government replaced the PDS with the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), intended to target households on the basis of income criterion, classifying people as Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Above Poverty Line (APL). PDS is the joint responsibility of the central government, state governments, and the union territory administrations to ensure the smooth functioning of the system. While the responsibility of the central government is to procure, store, and transport grains from purchase points to central warehouses, the responsibility of state governments and the union territory administrations is to transport these commodities from the central warehouses and distribute them to consumers through the network of FPS. State governments are also responsible for operational responsibilities including allocation and identification of families below poverty line, issue of ration cards, supervision and monitoring the functioning of FPSs.

Punjab stands at second position at all India level in terms of food grain production. Punjab is a major procuring state for wheat and rice and had an opening stock of 6.5 million tones on April 2012. The state has an average 14 lakh tones of movement of food grain to the consuming states .The network of PDS is maintained in the Punjab State through network of 8040 Fair Price Shops and 27496752 cardholders. The total number of BPL families in the State is limited to 5.23 lakh (3.44 lakh rural and 1.79 lakh urban) which is about 12% of the families in the State. In Punjab, 15.10 lakh families availing food subsidy under the Atta Dal scheme criterion annual income less than Rs. 30,000. The present study aims at analyzing the impact of Public Distribution System on BPL (Below Poverty Line) families in Sangrur district of Punjab, an agricultural state in Northwest India. .

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the process of research, previous studies concerning the overall functioning and effectiveness of (PDS) Public Distribution System have been studied to understand the research problem in carrying out the formulated work. Hence various research studies related to the Public distribution system are as following: Gupta (1975): studied the effectiveness of PDS. He examined the price stability as achieved through the operation of PDS using econometric models. He discovered that the quantities required to meet the need was much higher than what could be generated internally through procurement only. The additional requirements were several times of the total food grains distributed through the PDS. Dev (1996): revealed in his study that the improved food security to the household is important for a developing country like India where millions of poor suffer from persistent hunger and malnutrition and some of others are exposed to this risk in future. This study examined the poverty and food security problem with emphasis on PDS. Narwal Sujata (2001): revealed in her study "Management of Public Distribution System" analyses the policy framework and several managerial aspects of the PDS in Haryana. Further, evaluated the working of the system from the feed-back of consumers and beneficiaries, in term of their satisfaction level. Pathania Kulwant Singh (2005): revealed in his study "Public Distribution System, Status, Challenges and Remedial strategies" that more than seventy per cent population lives below poverty line in

Himachal Pradesh .As a result, poor people continue to be deprived of the basic necessities of life. Shortage of essential commodities on the one hand and galloping inflation on the other hand made the life of the people in society very difficult and miserable. He suggested that Govt should run mobile fair price shops so as to cater to the needs of the people residing in far flung areas. Anti-social activities like black-marketing, hoarding in the supply and distribution should be banned and culprits should be dealt with strictly. Kumar Parmod (2010): evaluated in his study “Targeted Public Distribution System: Performance and Inefficiencies” findings for the six selected states about the efficiency of the PDS system were mixed ones. The performance of PDS in terms of providing food to the poor was quite satisfactory in Delhi and uttarakhand where nearly 35kgs of cereals were distributed to more than 98 per cent targeted groups. In Kerala and Maharashtra, coverage of targeted groups was above 96 percent. Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand, fell short of target, both in term of targeting population and the amount of cereals distributed.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To examine the quality, price, availability and accessibility of food grains supplied to the people by Govt under Public Distribution system.
- To know about the perception and satisfaction level of consumers regarding the overall functioning of Public Distribution system in sangrur district of Punjab.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

The Present study is empirical in nature and has been studied by using primary and Secondary data. Survey method was followed for this study. The present study was undertaken in Sangrur district of Punjab, an agricultural state in Northwest India and three blocks from Sangrur district were selected for this study. For collecting data, 100 respondents (50 urban and 50 rural) were selected by using random sampling. 100 respondents were visited with the help of block officials of Punjab. Punjab is situated in north-west of India and has an area of 50,362 km². According to 2011 census, the population of Punjab is 27,704,236 and literacy rate is 76.70 percent. Punjab is divided into three regions namely Malwa, Majha and Doaba. Malwa region of Punjab covers 11 districts, Barnala, Bathinda, Faridkot, Fatehgarh Sahib, Firozpur, Ludhiana, Mansa, Moga, Muktsar, Patiala and Sangrur. The Sangrur is one of the backward districts in Punjab. Sangrur district ranks 7th in Punjab with a population of 16, 54, 408 and literacy rate is 69.95 percent Sangrur district comprises 10 blocks as Sangrur, Bhawanigarh, Sunam, Lehragaga, Andana, Malerkotla-1, Malerkotla -2, Ahmedgarh, Dhuri and Sherpur. The details of fair price shops of sangrur district have been listed on the following table.

Table 1: Details of Fair Price Shops / No. of Ration Cards (BPL, AAY, APL & BLUE) has been Shown of the Sangrur District in the Following Table

Sr. No	Block Name	No. of Depots	APL Cards	AAY Cards	BPL Cards	Blue Cards
1	Sangrur	208 (15.56)	57581 (17.87)	799 (7.93)	6348 (15.56)	13310 (15.17)
2	Bhawanigarh	90 (6.73)	22822 (7.08)	275 (2.73)	6162 (15.11)	6272 (7.14)
3	Sunam	260 (19.46)	58531 (18.16)	1299 (12.90)	4938 (12.10)	17093 (19.48)
4	Lehragaga	122 (9.13)	22344 (6.93)	730 (7.25)	6135 (15.04)	6937 (7.90)

Table 1: Contd.,

5	Andana	101 (7.55)	23473 (7.28)	1270 (12.61)	3655 (8.96)	7636 (8.70)
6	Malerkotla-1	176 (13.17)	58051 (18.01)	1020 (10.13)	1324 (3.24)	14224 (16.21)
7	Malerkotla-2	112 (8.38)	23448 (7.27)	1437 (14.27)	4128 (10.12)	6763 (7.70)
8	Ahmedgarh	60 (4.49)	15362 (4.76)	421 (4.18)	1135 (2.78)	3605 (4.10)
9	Dhuri	141 (10.55)	27889 (8.65)	1409 (13.99)	3997 (9.80)	8230 (9.38)
10	Sherpur	66 (4.94)	12681 (3.93)	1407 (13.97)	2955 (7.24)	3653 (4.16)
Total		1336 (100.0)	322182 (100.0)	10067 (100.0)	40777 (100.0)	87723 (100.0)

Source: Department of Food & Civil Supplies, Sangrur

The above table 1 reveals that in the year 2012, there were 1336 fair price shops and 322182 APL ration cards, 10067 AAY ration cards, 40777 BPL ration cards and 87723 Blue ration cards in sangrur district to provide essential commodities to the consumers. The maximum no of depots 260 (19.46 percent) were in Sunam block, 208(15.56 percent) were in Sangrur block and minimum no of depots 60(4.49 percent) were in Ahmedgarh block and 66(4.94 percent) were in Sherpur block in Sangrur district of Punjab. The maximum no of APL ration cards 58531(18.16 percent) were in Sunam block, 58051(18.01 percent) were in Malerkotla-1 block of Sangrur district and minimum no of APL ration cards 12681(3.93 percent) were in Sherpur block, 15362(4.76 percent) were in Ahmedgarh block of Sangrur district. The maximum no of AAY ration cards 1437(14.27 percent) were in Malerkotla-2, 1409(13.99 percent) were in Dhuri blocks and minimum no of AAY ration cards 275(2.73 percent) were in Bhawanigarh, 421(4.18 percent) were in Ahmedgarh blocks of Sangrur district. The maximum no of BPL ration cards 6348(15.56 percent) were in sangrur block, 6162 (15.11 percent) were in Bhawnigarh blocks and minimum no of BPL ration cards 1135(2.78 percent) were in Ahmedgarh and 1324(3.24 percent) were in Malerkotla-1 blocks of Sangrur district. The maximum no of Blue cards 17093 (19.48 percent) were in Sunam block, 14224(16.21 percent) were in Malerkotla-1 blocks of Sangrur district and minimum no of Blue cards 3605(4.10 percent) were in Ahmedgarh, 3653(4.16 percent) were in Sherpur blocks of Sangrur district. The details of various schemes and ration cards of Sangrur district have been listed on the following table.

Table 2: Various Schemes and Ration Cards under PDS in Sangrur

Type of Household		AAY	BPL	AAY+ Blue Cards	BPL+ Blue Cards	Blue Cards
Eligibility Norms (kg)	Wheat	35	35	35	35	25
	Dal	Nil	Nil	2.5	2.5	2.5
Rate per kg (Rs.)	Wheat	2.00	4.57	2.00	4.00	4.00
	Dal	Nil	Nil	20.00	20.00	20.00
Allocation Remarks		Wheat per family size	Wheat per family size	Wheat per family size, Dal @ 0.5 kg per member up to 2.5 kg maximum per household	Wheat per family size, Dal @ 0.5 kg per member up to 2.5 kg maximum per household	Wheat 5 kg per member; 25 kg maximum for five and more members' family; Dal @ 0.5 kg per member up to 2.5 kg maximum per household

Source: Office of District Controller, Food Civil Supply and Consumer Affairs, Sangrur

The table 2 depicts that in Sangrur district, AAY household got wheat quota of 35 kg (Centre's norms) only @ Rs. 2.00 per kg and a household covered under AAY and blue card got additional entitlement of dal equivalent of 2.5 kg @ Rs. 20 per kg with the overall quota of AAY wheat 35 kg in 2010. Below poverty line (BPL) families are provided wheat per month at the scale of 35 kg of wheat per family@ 4.57per kg. The government of Punjab changed allocation norms of ADS in 2010. Under the blue card, wheat quota was reduced from 35 kg to 25 kg (by decreasing allocation from 7 kg to 5 kg per member) and of dal from 4 kg to 2.5 kg (by reducing allocation from one kg to 0.5 kg per member).

Field Survey

A study of utilization of PDS and Consumer satisfaction with PDS (Public Dsitrubution System), a survey was conducted in blocks (Dhuri, Sangrur and Sunam) of Sangrur district. For collecting data, 100 respondents (50 urban and 50 rural) were selected by using random sampling. 100 respondents were visited with the help of block officials of Sangrur. In Sangrur district, there are BPL, AAY, Blue cards, BPL + Blue cards and AAY + Blue types of ration cards. The details of various types ration cards of Sangrur district have been listed on the following table.

Table 3: Types of Ration Cards

Ration Cards	BPL	Antyodaya	Blue Card	BPL+ Blue Card	AAY+ Blue Card	Total
Rural	21 (42.0)	5 (10.0)	11 (22.0)	11 (22.0)	2 (4.0)	50 (100.0)
Urban	1 (2.0)	2 (4.0)	20 (40.0)	19 (38.0)	8 (16.0)	50 (100.0)
Total	22 (44.0)	7 (14.0)	31 (62.0)	30 (60.0)	10 (20.0)	100 (100.0)

Source: Personal prove survey

It is clear from table 3 that out of 100 respondents (50 Rural & 50 Urban) Hundred cardholders were selected for study, out of total 100 Cardholders around 44 percent cardholders are from the BPL families, 14 percent cardholders are from the Antyodaya ration card families which is the poorest among the poor category, 62 percent cardholders are from Blue card families, largest number of the interviewed cardholders is from this category, second largest number of the interviewed cardholders 60 percent are from BPL+ Blue cards cardholders and 20 percent are from AAY+ Blue cards cardholders. The details of different commodities like wheat, wheat & Kerosene, Wheat+ Kerosene+ Dal and wheat & Dal which are mainly purchased by Householders in rural and urban areas of Sangrur district have been listed on the following table.

Table 4: Commodities Mainly Purchased from FPS

Commodity/ Area	Wheat	Wheat & Kerosene	Wheat, Kerosene & Dal	Wheat & Dal	Nothing	Total
Rural	10 (20.0)	14 (28.0)	15 (30.0)	7 (14.0)	4 (8.0)	50 (100.0)
Urban	1 (2.0)	2 (4.0)	31 (62.0)	15 (30.0)	1 (2.0)	50 (100.0)
Total	11 (11.0)	16 (16.0)	46 (46.0)	22 (22.0)	5 (5.0)	100 (100.0)

Source: Personal prove survey

Table 4 depicts that among all sections of the masses the commodities are mainly purchased by householders in rural and urban areas. It has been noted that the wheat, kerosene, Dal are the major items purchased by the people in FPS.

Out of 100 households 46 householders including 15 (30 percent) rural and 31 (62 percent) urban respondents are purchasing wheat, kerosene, Dal mainly from FPS. The 22 householders including 7 (14 percent) rural and 15 (30 percent) urban respondents are purchasing wheat and Dal from FPS. The 16 households including 14 (28 percent) rural and 2 (4 percent) Urban respondents are purchasing wheat and kerosene from FPS. The 11 householders including 10 (20 percent) rural and 1 (2 percent) urban respondents are purchasing only wheat from FPS. The last 5 respondents including 4 (8 percent) rural and 1 (2 percent) urban respondents are purchasing nothing from FPS.

Table 5: Ration Card Holders Satisfied or Non-Satisfied with the Location of FPS (Fair Price Shops)

Satisfaction Level of Consumers with FPS		Highly Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Average	Satisfied	Highly Satisfied	Responses 100
i) Are you satisfied with the location of FPS	Rural	1 (2.0)	3 (6.0)	4 (8.0)	42 (84.0)	0 (0.0)	50 (100.0)
	Urban	0 (0.0)	8 (16.0)	5 (10.0)	37 (74.0)	0 (0.0)	50 (100.0)
Total	Rural/ Urban	1(1.0)	11(11.0)	9(9.0)	79(79.0)	0(0.0)	100(100.0)

Source: Personal Prove Survey

The above table 5 reveals the satisfaction level of respondents with the location of FPS (Fair Price shops). The study reveals that, regarding the location of the FPS, in rural areas 42 percent of households expressed their satisfaction, 4 percent of households expressed average level of satisfaction and 4 percent expressed their dissatisfaction. In Urban areas, 37 percent of households expressed their satisfaction, 5 percent of households expressed average level of satisfaction and 8 percent expressed their dissatisfaction. The quality of the commodities supplied under PDS is very important aspect in understanding the PDS efficiency. The details of satisfaction level of ration cardholders with quality have been listed on the following table.

Table 6: Ration Card Holders Satisfied or Non-Satisfied with Quality

Satisfaction Level of Consumers with FPS		Highly Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Average	Satisfied	Highly Satisfied	Responses 100
ii) Are you satisfied with the quality of products of FPS	Rural	1 (2.0)	8 (16.0)	14 (28.0)	27 (54.0)	0 (0.0)	50 (100.0)
	Urban	1 (2.0)	7 (14.0)	16 (32.0)	25 (50.0)	1 (2.0)	50 (100.0)
Total	Rural/ Urban	2(2.0)	15(15.0)	30(30.0)	52(52.0)	1(1.0)	100(100.0)

Source: Personal prove survey

It is evident from the table 6 that regarding the quality of the commodities supplied under the PDS in rural areas, 27 respondents are satisfied, 14 are on average level, 8 are dissatisfied and 1 is highly dissatisfied with the quality of food grains but in Urban areas, 25 respondents expressed their satisfaction level, 16 respondents are on average level, 7 are dissatisfied and 1 is highly dissatisfied with the quality of food grains.

Table 7: Ration Card Holders Satisfied or Non-Satisfied with Price

Satisfaction Level of Consumers with FPS		Highly Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Average	Satisfied	Highly Satisfied	Responses 100
iii) Are you satisfied with the price charged by FPS	Rural	1(2.0)	4(8.0)	13(26.0)	32(64.0)	0(0.0)	50(100.0)
	Urban	0(0.0)	7(14.0)	15(30.0)	26(52.0)	2(4.0)	50(100.0)
Total	Rural/ Urban	1(1.0)	11(11.0)	28(28.0)	58(58.0)	2(2.0)	100(100.0)

Source: Personal prove survey

It is evident from the table 7 that regarding the price of the commodities supplied under the PDS in rural area, 32 (64 percent) respondents are satisfied, 13(26 percent) are on average level, 4(8 percent) are dissatisfied and 1(2 percent) is highly dissatisfied with the price of food grains. In urban area, 26 (52 percent) respondents expressed their satisfaction level, 15(30 percent) respondents are on average level, 7(14 percent) are dissatisfied and 2(4 percent) are highly satisfied with the price charged by FPS. The total respondents of rural and urban area, 58 respondents are satisfied, 28 are on average level, 11 are dissatisfied, 1 is highly dissatisfied and 2 are highly satisfied with the price of FPS. Regarding the behaviour of dealers, responses were taken from the respondents. The details of satisfaction level of ration cardholders with the behaviour of dealers of FPS have been listed on the following table.

Table 8: Ration Card Holders Satisfied or Non-Satisfied with the Behaviour of Dealers of FPS

Satisfaction Level of Consumers with FPS		Highly Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Average	Satisfied	Highly Satisfied	Responses100
iv) Are you satisfied with the behaviour of dealers of FPS with the customers	Rural	7(14.0)	17(34.0)	5(10.0)	21(42.0)	0(0.0)	50(100.0)
	Urban	2(4.0)	17(34.0)	12(24.0)	17(34.0)	2(4.0)	50(100.0)
Total	Rural/ Urban	9(9.0)	34(34.0)	17(17.0)	38(38.0)	2(2.0)	100(100.0)

Source: Personal Prove Survey

The above table 8 reveals that Most of the households in general expressed dissatisfaction about the FPS dealers. It reveals that, out of 50 respondents of rural areas, 21 are satisfied, 5 are on average satisfaction level, 17 are dissatisfied and 7 are highly dissatisfied with the behaviour of FPS dealer towards the consumers. In Urban areas, 17 respondents are satisfied, 12 respondents on average level, 17 are dissatisfied and 2 are highly dissatisfied with the behaviour of FPS dealer towards the consumers. The details of satisfaction level of ration cardholders with weighting procedure of FPS have been listed on the following table

Table 9: Ration Card Holders Satisfied or Non-Satisfied with Weighting Procedure

Satisfaction Level of Consumers with FPS		Highly Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Average	Satisfied	Highly Satisfied	Responses 100
v) Are you satisfied with the weighting procedure of FPS	Rural	2(4.0)	8(16.0)	17(34.0)	23(46.0)	0(0.0)	50100.0
	Urban	0(0.0)	11(22.0)	14(28.0)	24(48.0)	1(2.0)	50(100.0)
Total	Rural/ Urban	2(2.0)	19(19.0)	31(31.0)	47(47.0)	1(1.0)	100(100.0)

Source: Personal Prove Survey

Table 9 depicts that regarding the weighting procedure of FPS, out of 50 respondents of rural area, 23(46 percent) are satisfied, 17(34 percent) are on average satisfaction level, 8(16 percent) are dissatisfied and 2(4 percent) are highly dissatisfied with the weighting procedure of FPS. In Urban areas, 24(48 percent) respondents are satisfied, 14(28 percent) respondents on average level, 11(22 percent) are dissatisfied and 1 is highly satisfied with the weighting procedure of FPS. The total respondents of rural and urban area, 47 respondents are satisfied, 31 are on average level, 19 are dissatisfied, 2 are highly dissatisfied and 1 is highly satisfied with the weighting procedure of FPS. The essential commodities wheat, Dal, and kerosene must be available in right quantity, on a right time to all eligible cardholders through Fai price shops (FPS) in order to provide food security to the people.

Table 10: Whether you are Getting the Full Quota of Food Grains on Time from FPS

Consumer's Response	Whether you are Getting the Full Quota from FPS			Whether the Commodities are Available on Time			Whether the Quantity Sufficient for your Family		
	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban	Total
Yes	22 (44.0)	23 (46.0)	45 (45.0)	22 (44.0)	22 (44.0)	44 (44.0)	14 (28.0)	22 (44.0)	36 (36.0)
No	28 (56.0)	27 (54.0)	55 (55.0)	28 (56.0)	28 (56.0)	56 (56.0)	36 (72.0)	28 (56.0)	64 (64.0)
Total	50 (100.0)	50 (100.0)	100 (100.0)	50 (100.0)	50 (100.0)	100 (100.0)	50 (100.0)	50 (100.0)	100 (100.0)

Source: Personal prove survey

The Table 10 clearly indicates that full quota of food grains is not available to the households. The 100 respondents have been asked, whether they are getting the full quota from FPS. On an average only 45.0 percent respondents are getting the full quota from FPS and 55.0 percent respondents are not getting the full quota from FPS. Out of 100 respondents, 28 (56 percent)rural and 27 (54 percent)Urban respondents are not getting full quota of food grains. Only 22(44 percent) rural and 23 (46 percent) Urban respondents are getting full quota of food grain from FPS (Fair Price Shops). In response to the question, whether commodities supplied under PDS are available in proper time, Out of 100 respondents, 28(56 percent) rural households and 28(56 percent) Urban households said no and only 22(44 percent) rural households and 22(44 percent) urban households said that commodities are available on time. On an average only 44.0 percent respondents are getting the commodities on time from FPS and 56.0 percent respondents are not getting the commodities on time from FPS. The majority of the households are not satisfied with supply arrangements of FPS. It shows the irregularity of food grains supply under the PDS. The ration quota fixed under PDS is very less and it is not sufficient to a household. The above table depicts clearly that more than half of the rural and urban households said that quantity issued by the FPS to them is inadequate. Majority of the respondents were in favour of issuing ration quota on basis of both the income and size of the family. Out of 100 sample households, there are 50 rural and 50 urban households who have BPL, AAY and Blue ration cards. All households (100 percent) expressed that the quantity of wheat, Dal and Kerosene is inadequate. Only 36 percent (14 rural,22 urban)of households said quantity of commodities supplied under PDS is sufficient and64 percent (36 rural,28 urban) of households expressed quantity of commodities received is inadequate, which is not sufficient for their families.

SUGGESTIONS

- There has to be transparency in the system. The availability, allocation, lifting and distribution of items per period per FPS should be on display. The verification report must be displayed at the level of consumers in village and block. The State Government should continue its vigil and control over hoarding, black marketing and speculation through “Consumer protection Cell”.
- Supply better quality and quantity commodities at reasonable price after Identify local needs. Allotment of kerosene oil and pulses should be increased per card/unit. There is no clear policy for the identification of BPL families and sometimes fake BPL and Blue cards are made by the officers by involving the Sarpanches/ Panches. Frequent checks and Cancel false cards (APL households having Blue cards of state, even these belong to APL families and de-link cardholding from political affiliation.

- The PDS is not equipped with the proper storage and transportation facilities. There are various private agencies engaged in the process of transportation. Besides, the FCI and SFCs do not have proper storage facilities. Due to lack of better movement of food grains in Punjab, since 1997-2007, 10 lakh tones of food grains damaged (3.95 lakh tone of rice ,1.83 lakh tones of wheat) which can feed 1 crore people for 1 year . Therefore need arises to study the reasons of not lifting the food grain well in time. The government should provide transportation to depot holder for taking ration from the district/ regional stores to the FPSs so that there can be check on the corrupt activities while transportation.
- The fair price shops needs to be within the village and delivery of commodities should be with fixed dates and timing. Items should be distributed based on units in the family. This will reduce the actual/fake division of family in rural areas. This will also lead to enhanced per capita availability of food grains.
- The FPS dealers do not get any return/incentive on the items that they draw from generally a long distance for distribution to different type of ration card holders under various schemes. This incentive has to be fixed in the form of a commission and the existing rate of commission of FPS dealers should be enhanced, This may reduce malpractices at the level of the FPS dealers. Provide transportation facility and field allowance for FPS dealers.

CONCLUSIONS

The Govt of India established this Public Distribution System in order to achieve the objectives of proper and equitable distribution of food grains, Price stability & check inflation, Controlling black marketing and Supply essential commodities at fair prices. The Government of Punjab is also making all efforts to make the PDS more effective by ensuring the availability, affordability and accessibility of PDS articles to the poor in Punjab state. The Green Revolution helped Punjab become more prosperous, by supplying grain to the rest of India. This role was consonant with the goals of national policy. But Punjab's agricultural economy, based on supplying food grain for the PDS, is heading for disaster. The main objective of PDS in Punjab is to provide the essential commodities wheat, Dal, and kerosene must be available in right quantity, on a right time to all eligible cardholders through Fair price shops(FPS) in order to provide food security to BPL, AAY, Blue cards and APL ration cardholders. But the responses of sample respondents of this study showed different picture and PDS is suffering from problems like non-availability of food grains, deterioration of food grains, unsatisfactory quality and quantity of commodities, malpractices in weights and measures, inefficiency of the depot holder, rude behavior of dealers, unfair distribution of food grain and preference to known persons. Non-availability of the ration and rude behavior of dealers are the most frequent problems faced by the people visiting ration shops. It has been found that the non-availability of food grains is due to various reasons like storage and transport problems, irregular supply from government, black marketing and lack of government supervision and control. Even when the ration is available, it is of poor quality. Majority of respondents find fault with the government rather than the dealers. The general perception of the people is that the government is responsible for every problem. In order to remove all these above mention malpractices and for the improvement of public distribution system, fair procedural and policy reforms should be encouraged.

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